

OPEN GATE FARM, HOUSE  
Ridge Road, one mile east of  
Elephant Road  
Perkasie  
Bucks County  
Pennsylvania

HABS NO. PA-5589

HABS  
PA  
9-PERK,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS AND  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### OPEN GATE FARM

HABS NO. PA-5589

Location: Ridge Road, one mile east of Elephant Road, Perkasio, Bucks County, Pennsylvania

Significance: Stone farmhouse displaying the additive quality typical of Bucks County farmhouse architecture. The entire house was built in sections, during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It has a number of interesting intact features such as the large double cooking fireplace in the summer kitchen, corner fireplaces in the living room, a Rumford fireplace in an upstairs bedroom, exposed summer and floor beams, winder stairs, etc.

Description: The house was built in three sections, all of irregular-coursed uncut stone (with a more recent frame addition at one end). The main block, at the southeast end, consists of two sections which together form a two-story, five-bay-by-two-bay structure with a gable roof (there is a seam in the stone between the second and third bay). Attached to this is a lower, two-story, two-bay wide section, also of irregular stone. Attached to this is a one-and-a-half story frame section (added later to enclose an exposed summer kitchen). There are entries to the southwest front and to the northeast rear of the two center sections, with simple architrave surrounds and transom windows in the larger southeast section. The windows are all two-over-two-light double-hung sash (probably replacements of the original), with paneled shutters on the first floor. The lower section sits back from the main block to the front and a porch runs the length of its facade. There are interior end chimneys at each gable end.

On the interior, the main block to the southeast consists of one large room with a side hall to the northwest. This room was originally two rooms as evidenced by the corner fireplaces, back-to-back on the southeast wall. A summer beam indicates where there was probably once a partition wall dividing the smaller front room from the room to its rear. The side hall has a partially boxed stairway (open on second floor) to the southwest front, near the main entry. The middle section adjoining consists of the current dining room to the rear and a smaller den to the front. Adjoining this is the kitchen, one large open room with a *cooking fireplace (there was once a winder stairway in this section)*. Adjoining this is what was once an outside, double-hearth raised fireplace used for rendering lard and making preserves. It was enclosed as a secondary kitchen in the 20th century.

On the second floor are two bedrooms over the southeast section, and a large stairhall, leading to small access halls to the northeast and northwest. The northeast hall provides access to a bath (to the northeast) and a bedroom with a Rumford fireplace in one corner (to the northwest). The northwest hall provides access to two small rooms to the front of the house (a bedroom and a bath) and another hall where there is a bedroom, bath and winder stair (over the newly enclosed kitchen). The ceilings on the second floor have exposed beams, and original wide plank flooring.

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The finish varies from room to room. The parlor has plaster walls with a chair rail, ceilings with exposed joists, (new) wood floors and splayed reveal windows without surrounds. There are two corner fireplaces, back to back on the southeast wall (one has been closed). The hall to the side of the parlor is without the chair rail and exposed beam ceiling. It has a box-winder stairway. The doorways have a simple narrow architrave surround and, six-panel cross-and-open-bible doors. The dining room (center section) has plaster walls with chair rail, windows with splayed reveals and a simple, stepped surround and a built-in cabinet. Under one of the windows is a bible or pay drawer (there is another in the den). Next is the kitchen section which is up one step from the dining room and has lower ceilings, plaster walls without ornamentation and random width wood floors. There is a large fireplace in the northeast corner, with a bake oven. Adjacent to this--through a small hallway--is a kitchen annex, originally an outdoor raised hearth for rendering lard and making apple butter and preserves. The raised hearth has openings to accommodate the two cast-iron kettles. Underneath is the firebox. A flue to the center draws air from the firebox. One of the kettles is a double boiler (for rendering lard) and the other has a crank for mashing fruit for preserves. In the southwest corner of this room is a boxed winder stairway.

History:

No research was conducted at the time of the survey. A chain-of-title (available at the Bucks County Conservancy) reveals that this was originally the Trough farmstead, granted to Rudolph Trough by Thomas and Richard Penn on the 24th of June 1763. It remained in the family until 1804. From 1804 to 1840 it was the farm of Abraham Yost, who probably built the center section which has been given the date of 1809 (date stone). The farm belonged to the Knopple family for many years, from 1860 to 1900. It was purchased by the current owner, Florence Platt Schaffhausen, and her husband (now deceased) and operated as Open Gate Farms, Inc. Open Gate was an experimental farm, managed by Mr. Schaffhausen who was an agricultural consultant. Individuals would come here to study new agricultural processes, and stay at the house. Mrs. Schaffhausen was a news reporter who ran an environmental column.

Historian:

Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS, November 1991